

**PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT IN  
SOUTHEAST DOWNTOWN TORONTO:**

**AN EMPLOYMENT LINKAGE PROPOSAL  
COMBINING EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION,  
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS, TRANSITIONAL JOBS  
AND EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT**

**PREPARED FOR:      THE DOWNTOWN EAST COMMUNITY  
                                 DEVELOPMENT COLLECTIVE**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The member partners of DECDC serve a population of whom many face significant and often multiple barriers to employment: individuals and neighbourhoods experiencing long-term poverty; people with lower levels of education and skills, with limited work histories; new immigrants to Canada; the homeless.

There are a large number of projects (particularly in the United States) which offer a compelling model for a program which would seek to provide successful pathways to employment for such a community. The significant lessons of those experiences strongly suggest the following:

- The approach must be designed as a ***broad system*** as opposed to an individual project, that is, it needs to involve a number of partners and a number of components, as the sum of activities and programs is unlikely to be found within one organization or within the scope of one jurisdiction;
- That system needs to ***integrate a continuum of social, personal and employment supports***, though pre-employment preparation, training and workplace experience, employment placement assistance, in-placement (job retention) supports, and post-placement (career advancement) assistance;
- That even with such a continuum of services and assistance, for many individuals with multiple barriers to employment an intermediary step before actual placement into a standard job may be required, that is, a ***transitional work experience***, which allows them to gain familiarity with the routine of a workplace while still receiving the necessary personal supports;
- The system needs to have ***strong outreach to employers***, in the first instance to identify current and emerging job vacancies and needs, itemizing the skills required and, in the second instance, offering these employers recruitment and screening services for entry-level jobs and involving employers in shaping customized training programs for these positions;
- The system needs ***sufficient scale*** in order to offer:
  - an appropriate range of program and service options for each client;
  - a sufficient number of prospective job possibilities for those clients; and
  - a sufficient pool of potential candidates to qualify for those jobs.

Existing programs in Toronto serving the harder-to-employ population may demonstrate limited and isolated successes but the current nature of funding arrangements (silo funding targeting specific populations and limited funding which largely encourages serving those easier to help succeed) means that the system as a whole fails those who most need assistance in accessing employment.

## **DOWNTOWN EAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COLLECTIVE**

### **PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT IN SOUTHEAST DOWNTOWN TORONTO**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This report has been prepared for the Downtown East Community Development Collective (DECDC), a consortium of community agencies and public institutions located in the southeast downtown of Toronto.<sup>1</sup> DECDC aims to identify, promote and develop economic opportunities within and on behalf of the community these organizations serve. This report was prepared under the direction of DECDC and with financial assistance from the Wellesley Central Health Corporation.

The purpose of this report is two-fold:

- to examine the practice of employment linkage programs, identifying best practices; and
- to propose a strategy to DECDC, having regard to the experience of others and the circumstances relating to the southeast downtown (including the range of existing services, the specific needs of local residents and agency clients, and the funding climate).

While the main focus of this work's inquiry was employment linkage programs, the research involved a literature and Internet review of various resources and programs relating to transition to employment programs for disadvantaged populations. Most of the initiatives, studies and resources examined were community-based programs which targeted disadvantaged populations to assist them with training, employment and other service/support programs, with the purpose of achieving regular and sustainable employment at an adequate wage. This research was supplemented by interviews with service providers and government funders in Toronto.

This report is organized as follows:

- A short summary of the argument being advanced;
- Background contexts to this study;

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<sup>1</sup> DECDC includes: Central Neighbourhood House, Dixon Hall, Downtown Economic Enterprise Development, Fred Victor Centre, Open Door Centre and Rooms Registry Inc., Ryerson University, Sherbourne Health Centre, Toronto Christian Resource Centre and St. Michael's Inner City Health Centre.

- Specific research findings;
- A proposed initiative for southeast downtown Toronto;
- Next steps
- General research findings.

## **SUMMARY OF CONCEPT**

The end result of this research is the view that southeast downtown Toronto requires a new approach if community agencies are to assist the many harder-to-employ and marginalized individuals obtain sustainable employment. This will require:

- Community agencies providing employment assistance services to coordinate better linkages between their programs, including either more inter-agency referrals and/or some common “case management” of shared clients; at present, none of the agencies has either the sufficient scale or range of programs to provide the continuum of services which clients require;
- Clients graduating from employment preparation programs require more effective help in finding appropriate employment; partnering community agencies need to pool their resources and undertake one shared common employment placement function;
- Many of these clients will require a transitional work experience – it is proposed that discussion take place with Ontario Works to adapt the Community Placement experience into a structured work experience, providing a more appropriate step between employment preparation and placement into a private sector job;
- Other transitional experiences should also be expanded, notably part-time and casual work opportunities as well as working in CED businesses or social purpose enterprises.

## **BACKGROUND CONTEXTS**

There are two relevant contexts to the discussion in this paper: one is the funding context for such programs, the other is the labour market pressures which have created the need for such programs.

### **The funding context**

It has become commonplace to point out the challenges posed by the nature of the funding regimes which are available to assist individuals seeking to secure gainful employment. These include:

Silo-funding. Most government funding is strictly defined in terms of the purpose for which the funding is to be spent and the population to be served by that funding. There are very good reasons for this.

For one, the federal nature of our system of government allocates jurisdiction for various matters either to the federal or provincial governments (and, through downloading, municipal governments), meaning that constitutionally each level of government is limited to the subject matter with respect to which it can pass legislation. Programs end up being specifically designed to fit within constitutional boundaries.

For another, the machinery of government relies on a bureaucratic form of organizing its activities according to subject matter: one department responsible for health issues, another for education, another for economic policy. Functionally, there is a logic to this: it is akin to organizing a filing cabinet of papers according to topics.

One cannot ignore constitutional boundaries, however people are citizens of federal, provincial and municipal entities and their needs cross those boundaries.

People also have multiple needs, which cross the subject categories of government departments and ministries.

Lack of a Labour Market Development Agreement in Ontario. The disjuncture in policy and programs in the field of employment preparation is further exacerbated in Ontario by the lack of a Labour Market Development Agreement between the federal and provincial governments, the only province lacking such an agreement. The purpose of these agreements was to allow for better delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the two levels of governments, given the potential for overlap, duplication and gaps resulting from the existing allocation of constitutional jurisdictions.

This places a greater burden on community agencies, which must negotiate through the different funding priorities and target populations of the two levels of government, trying to integrate on the ground funding which may have different purposes. As well, bureaucracies mindful of jurisdictional boundaries police these programs, trying to determine which activities might more properly be funded by another government. While the aim here is to ensure that monies allocated fit legislative and constitutional definitions, the result can mean a project being cancelled with no assurance that the other level of government will agree to fund it. Disagreements regarding jurisdiction lead to gaps in services and much energy expended on satisfying program definitions, with the losers being the citizens these programs are meant to serve.

Budget cycles, measurable results and “savings”. There is, of course, a need for accountability of public monies, and so funding follows government budget cycles (which means funding for more than one year is rare) and increasingly is linked to measurable results, including incentives to “save” taxpayers’ dollars.

As in the case of government silos, there are here laudable objectives. They do have other consequences, however.

An adherence to budget cycles and outcomes places a premium on short-term results, leaving those with the most different and complex cases with less attention.

A good example of how jurisdictional divisions and budget imperatives come together to thwart any good being done is the case of the homeless. In essence, the homeless almost always require at least three basic forms of assistance: housing, health services and income support or access to employment. The constitutional and departmental divisions among our governments make it extremely difficult to knit together this blend of assistance. Indeed, the challenge is made greater because of inherent disincentives in the system: housing for the homeless requires substantial support in the way of personal counselling and other services (that is, departments of housing and of community or social services), whereas the benefit which results would most likely be experienced by hospitals or emergency health and police services (departments of health and of police). Similarly, social assistance reform which measures success by moving people off welfare and into jobs means the homeless will be served last, if at all: it is far costlier to provide such a service to a homeless person, and there may not be ANY measurable savings – being in a homeless shelter a homeless person does not collect any social assistance, hence there is no financial incentive for the system to help.

Limited funding for the role of community agencies. In Canada the community sector has often played a unique role in serving the social, economic, recreational, cultural and personal needs of Canadians, drawing on financing and other resources from governments, businesses and philanthropic foundations, as well as from the community itself, through volunteers and other in-kind contributions. In aiming to serve the specific circumstances of their local communities and clients, these organizations and agencies regularly find themselves acting as brokers between available resources and community and individual needs, cobbling together customized interventions drawing from a menu of programs which their funders support. Thus not only are these community organizations vehicles through which *individual* government programs are delivered, they also negotiate the *appropriate mix of programs* needed for a holistic approach to multi-faceted individual problems.

The problem is that this brokering role is rarely recognized by governments, or when recognized, certainly not funded. Where governments have sought to cut their expenditures by reducing their own staff numbers, they have sought more and more to use community agencies to deliver many of their programs, albeit following the “silo” approach. However, community agencies are rarely funded for the brokering role they play, which involves facilitating the coordination of these various services and programs, designing systems for a case management approach, and undertaking proposal writing for philanthropic funding to fill the gaps created by the constricted nature of government funding.

To put it another way: governments to a large extent try to avoid funding the “core” operations of community agencies, that is, their administrative costs, rent, utility charges, the cost of hiring and training staff, and so on. Certainly various government programs

often do allow for a percentage of the funding provided for delivering a program to be applied to “overhead,” but only that portion which can be attributed to putting into effect that program. But by receiving only portions of their overhead costs, agencies cannot be assured of funding for their entire core budget. As a result, agencies end up constantly chasing program dollars to get some share of their overhead, as well as engage in constant fundraising to ensure their own survival.

Added to this strain have been the many cutbacks in government funding which have resulted in several pressures on community agencies: for one, there are more clients seeking a boarder range of supports because of reduced social assistance income, there are fewer affordable housing options, and more personal and family difficulties arising from more desperate economic circumstances. With less program and project dollars available, more competition for philanthropic donations, and greater expectations of concrete results and more detailed reporting requirements, community agencies have been more and more overwhelmed by the demands placed on them.

**All these factors have contributed to a system of employment transition programs for those facing multiple barriers to employment which is both inadequate and patchy.**

### **The labour market context**

The broad trend in the labour market. A number of studies identifying new practices in this field provided a context for why the search for new ways to address the employment challenges of disadvantaged populations has arisen. In essence, the changing economy, with less reliance on permanent employment and a greater reliance on skills and adaptability has resulted in greater barriers to sustainable employment for populations with less experience, fewer skills and other personal challenges. Whereas before employment in an entry position with an employer often meant a permanent, reasonably paid position, nowadays many jobs are found in low-wage, unstable, usually service sector positions. As a result, more people face longer periods of unemployment, more people require an initial and often regular upgrading of their skills, and entry level jobs cannot be counted on for a livable wage or for any permanence.

All this means that people with multiple barriers to employment require more supports not only in accessing employment, but in maintaining employment, as well as assistance in developing their careers to access higher wage and more sustainable employment. As well, programs need to be even more customized for these individuals, in terms of addressing their particular needs and in providing appropriate options for them to acquire the necessary skills and work experience to navigate the challenges of an economy which is regularly in flux.

This complex environment poses significant difficulties for community agencies which now must become even more adept at understanding and responding to labour market



needs, in essence catering to the requirements of employers. For organizations which have focused largely on the needs of their disadvantaged clients, this results in a difficult balancing act, as community agencies seek to be entrepreneurial in their programming while still serving their social purpose. Community agencies can only survive by being extremely creative at packaging holistic programs from funding which has been reduced and/or now become more constricted in how monies can be used, including the greater emphasis on demonstrable results.

The specific circumstances in Toronto. This broad labour market trend is evident in Toronto as well. What is striking is the extent to which studies for future labour market needs for virtually all sectors and virtually all levels of skills forecast substantial shortages in Toronto for the years ahead, both because of an aging population as well as because of the increasing need for more and more skilled workers.

One likely result of this demand will be an even greater reliance on immigration to supply the labour deficit.

Clearly experience has shown that new immigrants, even those with appropriate skills, require substantial assistance in adjusting to their new country, in the way of settlement assistance, new language skills, guidance on negotiating Canada's labour environment, navigating professional requirements relating to licenses to acknowledge their overseas credentials and experiences, and gaining that first Canadian job experience. Community agencies have played a prominent role in all these respects, and so will require assistance to increase services to meet the need to integrate larger number of new immigrants into our workforce.

At the same time, it would be ironic if the search to fill the labour shortage ignored the existing pool of human capital already residing in our city, although not working. The longer-term unemployed and the harder-to-employ can be assisted in finding and maintaining jobs. What is troubling is that when one compares trends relating to unemployment in Canada and in Toronto between 1989 and 2000 (both of which were economic boom years), the unemployment rate in Canada dropped from 7.5% to 6.8% (a drop of some 10%) in Toronto the rate actually increased, from 4% to 5.5% (an increase of 36%) while the number of unemployed in Toronto jumped from about 90,000 to some 145,000 – a 61% increase (the larger proportionate increase reflects population growth as well).

Clearly we need to focus on getting our unemployed back into jobs, as well as assisting new Canadians find their way into the labour market. One of the challenges is providing help for those who have multiple barriers to employment (a poor work history, lower skills, lower education, personal and domestic challenges). This requires a different approach than what currently is in place. Fortunately there are models which point the way.

**The changing labour market creates greater challenges for those facing multiple barriers to employment. However experience in other jurisdictions provide models which are extremely relevant to Toronto, particularly as it faces significant labour shortages in the near future.**

## **SPECIFIC RESEARCH FINDINGS**

These findings are organized in the following way:

- Firstly, a specific, extended discussion of employment linkage programs, followed by a shorter review of casual and temp work placement programs;
- Secondly, an examination of the need for “transitional” employment experience and a successful U.S. program doing just that;
- Thirdly, a discussion of the “customized training” approach as it is promoted in Canada;
- Fourthly, short profiles of some existing models in Toronto;
- Finally, a review of best practices arising out of experiences in the United States, generally relating to transition to employment programs for the harder-to-employ.

### **Specific findings regarding employment linkage programs**

There are a number of reports cited below which speak to general characteristics of programs seeking to move individuals experiencing long-term unemployment and multiple barriers to employment into sustainable jobs. In general, “best practices” fall into three broad categories of findings:

- Combining one’s social vision with entrepreneurial skills (that is, using business tools to accomplish social ends);
- Connecting with one’s market (know the labour market and the employers’ needs);
- Address the client’s needs (with an emphasis on: assessment; a range of options – training, temporary placements, CED workplaces, various contractual arrangements with employers, and so on; the importance of other supports; the need for post-placement supports and a strategy for the *next* job).

In terms of the mechanics of an actual employment linkage program, the best report available is *Making Connections: A Study of Employment Linkage Programs (1998)* (see link below), a truly enlightening study of three employment linkage programs, in Portland, Oregon, Berkeley, California and Minneapolis, Minnesota, each with a near a decade of experience and operations at a significant scale. The annual job placements of these three programs ranged from 300 to 1700, involving mainly low-income individuals with lower levels of education – indeed, these programs managed to place 8-14% of each city’s unemployed population, including large proportions of people of colour. The jobs

themselves were often good quality, entry-level positions. The cost of the programs was not easily determined (the linkage portion is one cost, the support work of community agencies another matter altogether), but the study estimates the cost per placement as between CDN \$500 and \$2200 (not counting the community sector services and supports), compared to the typical employer cost to recruit, screen and hire of CDN \$3800, with comparable retention rates. This obvious “saving” does not even include the social assistance savings. The evidence thus shows that these programs can save *employers* money, while in getting former social assistance recipients jobs these programs also save social assistance and social services program costs.

Admittedly, these are large-scale programs, but they show what ultimately can be achieved when adopting employment linkage as a labour market and poverty alleviation strategy.

(The full 75 page report is available in .pdf form at: [http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/ccc\\_making.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/ccc_making.pdf); a four-page summary of the report can be found at: <http://www.communitychange.org/makcon.htm>).

To summarize this study:

Accessing employment depends on two critical elements:

- (1) skills (which in the case of individuals facing multiple barriers to employment would include life skills, employment readiness and skills upgrading); and
- (2) connections (that is, ways to access employers; for individuals in disadvantaged communities this is a significant barrier, and can include the fact that community agencies serving these populations often do not have the appropriate channels for connecting their clients to employers; obviously, such “connections” could be an important asset not only for the long-term unemployed but also for new immigrants).

While community agencies serving marginalized populations can offer a range of employment-readiness, job search and social support assistance, in most cases what they lack are paths to employment which lead to private sector companies.

Employment linkage programs in the United States have relied on either:

- (1) local government mandates such as “first choice hiring agreements” where in exchange for financial assistance or public approval of development plans, developers sign an agreement to look first to a pool of qualified workers referred by local agencies; or
- (2) voluntary agreements whereby employers facing labour shortages cooperate with local agencies that help identify candidates for jobs.

While legislatively mandated programs or even initial agreements open the door, it is the quality of the referral service and the ability of agencies to respond effectively to the information gained about employer needs which ensure the on-going strength of the programs. Indeed, even where programs have enforcement “teeth” for compliance, the preferred option is to entice employers with quality referrals.

There are two important functions of these programs:

- (1) the broker intermediary, managing the information system and brokering relationships between employers, other public institutions and private employment training and service providers; and
- (2) the referral network, composed of employment placement and training agencies, educational institutions and service providers, using the labour market information to assess, prepare and refer candidates for employment.

The one function manages the information flow about labour market demand, the other function directs the supply of candidates to employment opportunities. Clearly, to operate properly, the system must ensure (1) the quality and timeliness of the labour market information, (2) that appropriate assessment and accurate referral takes place, and (3) that the target population is given priority consideration while at the same time are being provided with the necessary employment readiness, training and other personal and social supports.

Another important feature is the degree to which the linkage program is viewed, at least in the medium term, as a systemic intervention in the labour market. Many involve a large number of partners (community organizations, placement agencies, training institutions). For example, the Berkeley linkage operation involves 20 community organizations serving low-income neighbourhoods; in Minneapolis, the system identifies close to 200 new job listings *daily*, relying on two full-time job developers calling employers; in Portland, the linkage program is staffed by 5.75 FTE persons, and is partnered with 218 educational and community organizations (of which ten are active and significant partners). On the employer side, while many smaller firms were helped, the majority of placements were to a small number of larger firms.

This systemic impact manifests itself in a number of ways:

- (1) the pressure on employment support and placement agencies now came from seeking to please employers, as opposed to being accountable to funders, resulting in a better link between activities and results;
- (2) at the same time, these agencies were able to meet these concrete expectations because they had a better sense of what was required through the labour market information coming from employers;
- (3) public agencies, including municipal governments, were able to view labour force development as a component of economic development, including tying economic development benefits and incentives to labour force development;

- (4) indeed, the existence of a labour force development strategy and linkage program contributed to the municipality's competitive advantage when seeking to attract new employers;
- (5) all this also served a poverty alleviation goal, given that the targets were marginalized neighbourhoods and populations.

The following factors affected a program's success:

- labour market conditions, including the type of growth, the dispersal of job openings (that is, one or two jobs among many small firms or many jobs among a few big firms), and the quality of entry level jobs;
- the education and skill level of the workforce (employers were particularly concerned regarding "soft" skills such as motivation, ability to communicate and dependability);
- the degree of employer engagement (at minimum, quality labour market information; beyond that, involvement in designing training programs);
- the quality of the referrals – this is what keeps employers engaged;
- the ability to overcome traditional recruitment and hiring habits;
- the capacity of the employment placement agencies to deliver quality candidates;
- the quality of coordination and information flow between the partners and with the employers.

The report finally makes the following suggestions for those seeking to replicate such employment linkage programs:

- Think of linkage programs as reformed workforce systems rather than simply as programs for the disadvantaged, with a different focus, enhanced competencies and new relationships among all the players;
- Find the right balance between demand-driven and supply-driven linkage models (that means on the one hand incentives and possibly sanctions for employers, and, on the other, quality referrals);
- Seek a region-wide approach to employment linkage to reduce competition between municipalities (no mention, though, of economies of scale);
- Gain broad-based political support (to ensure the role for municipal government – there is no discussion of doing this in the absence of municipal government, presumably because of the incentives and sanctions component);
- Ensure a range of staff capabilities, devoted full-time to this task (there are specific and varied skills involved, particularly, as far as community agencies go, in recruiting and understanding the needs of employers);
- Develop strong knowledge of regional labour markets (which in the first instance means one can respond to employers' needs, but in the next instance means one can build employers' confidence and trust in the service);

- Develop close relationships with employers, primarily by providing quality referrals (this will lead to employers participating in designing the training curricula as well as assisting with other issues which may arise);
- Create a market-driven service delivery system – most community agencies see themselves as serving clients, not employers, but they recognize they need to serve the labour market if they wish to help their clients attain employment; in order to do this, community agencies need:
  - Financial and technical assistance to develop and grow a linkage program;
  - Support for a network of agencies which includes strong and less experienced agencies, to ensure peer learning, together with planning funds for new initiatives;
  - Strengthening of the network through the development of materials, outreach and training to spread the learnings;
  - Seed money for start-ups and operating support for on-going programs, including support for economic development and business assistance programs to include employment linkage.

### **A slightly related model: nonprofit temp agencies**

Nonprofit temp agencies display several characteristics similar to those of employment linkage programs, particularly in seeking to serve populations with significant barriers to employment. Indeed, in the U.S., nonprofit agencies have moved into this field as they have seen employers increasingly rely on temporary employment to recruit entry-level workers. In light of the discussion regarding employment linkage programs, it might be useful to summarize one U.S. report which examined six such nonprofit operations. The report is called *New Avenues into Jobs: Early Lessons from Nonprofit Temp Agencies and Employment Brokers* (December, 1998) and can be downloaded from: [http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/ccc\\_avenues.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/ccc_avenues.pdf).

The report was not able to draw any conclusions regarding the longer-term impact of temp employment as a stepping-stone towards more permanent and sustainable employment, given the lack of appropriate longitudinal studies. Intuitively, they make the case that the hard-to-employ do not have work or life histories which look good on paper, and so getting their foot in the door of entry-level jobs seems like an appropriate strategy. The competitive advantage which nonprofit agencies can promote with employers over what private temp agencies offer is the pre-job preparation and in-placement support they provide the job candidate to help resolve any difficulties.

In terms of issues to consider in designing such a program, the following considerations arose:

- Different program objectives will lead to different program design (that is, is the goal to move people from welfare to work or is it to find quality employment);

- A limited amount of resources were spent on pre-placement training, with instead considerable effort put into post-placement support (retention assistance, re-employment assistance and advancement assistance);
- Similarly, greater emphasis was placed on working first, or with work combined with short-term skills and academic training, as opposed to extensive training;
- Employment placement models relied on several different contractual options: direct placement versus contingent or transitional placement; supported versus unsupported placements; subsidized versus unsubsidized placement; various kinds of transitional arrangements (including probationary, trial-period, and temp-to-perm contracts);
- With the exception of Goodwill (which can take advantage of employment and contract equity requirements), other programs depended on grant support;
- The report maintained that the nonprofit employment brokers internalized too many costs on behalf of job seekers and employers and recommended that employers should be charged for some of these costs (there are cost savings which employers reap from these arrangements, same as what we saw with employment linkage programs);
- More work has to be done to develop ladders to better paying and more sustainable jobs;
- Boards of these nonprofits had to adjust their perspectives, involving a shift from an exclusive focus on their clients to understanding that their mission was to serve businesses as well (a successful referral for a business ultimately serves the client, but getting there involves focusing on the business's needs, as well as serving the client);
- Providing various job options, including sheltered work for on-the-job experience, allows a program to serve the full range of the hard-to-employ, ensuring that the program is not simply “creaming” to get successful outcomes;
- These programs require scale to succeed, and managing growth and managing partnerships is a critical element to their success.

### **Transitional jobs**

Non-profit temp agencies place a premium on acquiring “any” job experience, in the belief that some “job” credentials mean more than basic training and counselling credentials. Even so, they acknowledge that to assist some of the hardest-to-employ may require something more suitable.

For some people with multiple barriers to employment (notably minimal work history and personal/domestic challenges), moving into a private sector job may be too great a challenge too soon, even with the help of various personal supports and employment preparation (as well as post-placement support). Employment readiness workshops and skills training may not be enough to prepare such individuals for the formal workplace, an environment which may appear much less forgiving than a lecture room. In addition,

private sector employers often do not see their function as assisting prospective employees in myriad ways to adjust to the “realities” of work, and may be not very tolerant of individuals who need more time and support to adjust.

For this segment of the population, experiencing the environment and demands of the workplace while still receiving a range of services and supports may be a necessary step. Two options recommend themselves: (i) social purpose enterprises; and (ii) temporary placements in the community and/or public sector positions.

Social purpose enterprises. Social purpose enterprises, or community economic development (CED) businesses, are enterprises which pursue both the business bottom-line of turning a profit but also the social bottom-line of achieving personal development goals for the individual employee. These businesses are places where individuals can experience the rigours and routine of the workplace and acquire specific skills, while at the same time be supported with services which address their personal needs. The value of such enterprises is that in offering real-world experiences, participants obtain the sense of satisfaction in their accomplishments and the confidence in their growing abilities while doing so in an atmosphere of support provided both by their employer and by their working peers.

Obviously the service and support programs attached to such businesses require their own funding, as it would be highly unlikely that the business operations could pay for this component of the enterprise. Indeed, many social purpose enterprises find it hard to earn enough revenue to support even the business side of their operations, although many do. In operating with a workforce which faces many barriers to employment, such businesses can be at a disadvantage, in terms of the productivity of their employees. Other businesses fail even without such a handicap, so for social purpose enterprises the challenge is particularly acute. But as noted before, many of such enterprises do manage to turn a profit. But even where they do not, the cost of subsidizing the business operations often can be demonstrated to be worthwhile, given the other benefits which arise from stabilizing the lives of the employees, resulting in savings in other fields of public expenditure (this has been particularly well documented in Toronto in relation to consumer-survivors, while in the United States, the measurements of the *social return on investment (SOI)* is an attempt to quantify these benefits).

Temporary placements in community and/or public sector positions. Another way for individuals to acquire workplace experience is through transitional jobs which serve more as internships or apprenticeships in advance of a real job placement. One very compelling example of this can be found in Philadelphia, called Philadelphia@Work. (The report on this program is entitled *The Transitional Work Corporation: Philadelphia@Work – An Innovative Welfare-to-Work Strategy for Participants with Substantial Job-Readiness Barriers* (2002), and may be obtained from:  
[http://www.ppv.org/pdffiles/brief\\_transitional-work.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/pdffiles/brief_transitional-work.pdf)



Philadelphia@Work is a project developed and funded by state, municipal and philanthropic partners. It operates as a temporary work agency, hiring welfare recipients and placing them in subsidized, six-month “transitional” jobs in public and non-profit workplaces. When the six months are over, the program helps them find permanent jobs.

Clients of this program work for 25 hours a week. Their “wage” is their continued welfare assistance and accompanying benefits, but this is now paid through the program. They also attend 10 hours a week of classes, in workplace and job-hunting skills and in basic education. They are supervised and supported by career advisors and educators, as well as worksite employees acting as mentors.

What is significant about this program is that the community and public sector workplace experiences strive to hold clients to the same expectations as they would find in the private sector. The program’s work developers seek out transitional work placements for their clients as well as private sector jobs for those who graduate from the program.

After nearly three years of operation, 4,365 people have enrolled in this program. Of these, 704 left the program for “good cause” (usually health reasons or because of pregnancy), while 489 were still in the active phase of the program (orientation or transition job). Of the 3,172 remaining participants, 42% moved into unsubsidized jobs (including positions in the organizations they had been placed with), and 69% of these were still working after six months. Significantly, of those who completed the six-month transitional placement, 98% were successfully placed. Of those who did not get to an unsubsidized job, the large majority had been dropped from the program for poor attendance.

The potential precedent this program offers for Toronto relates to Ontario Works and its Community Participation program. It would be interesting to explore a variation of this where the CP placements were more tightly structured and were part of a comprehensive program supporting a staged transition to wage-earning employment along the lines of the Philadelphia@Work experience. Clearly there would be a number of issues to sort out, notably ensuring that such transitional jobs did not displace actual employment among participating agencies and that they did not run afoul of union requirements. As well, the program development challenges would be significant and the Philadelphia example bears this out. But the fact that an existing model has been developed and implemented would be a strong starting guide, while Philadelphia’s successes would be an equally strong motivating feature. As well, providing community agencies with some staff support may allow for more programs to be delivered to the community.

### **Customized training**

The most relevant Canadian study relating to this field was a piece written by Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, entitled *Reintegrating the Unemployed Through Customized Training* (June, 1999), which may be downloaded from: <http://www.caledoninst.org/reintegr.pdf>.

In Canada there does not appear to be any employment linkage program as broad as the sort described in the U.S. study citing the experiences in Berkeley, Minneapolis and Portland. However, there are elements of such programs (some of these are described under “Some Models in Toronto,” below), while the most pertinent discussion outlining a conceptual framework can be found in Torjman’s study.

In Torjman’s view, customized training operates in the following way:

“...[A] designated organization works with local employers to identify the training needs for certain targeted jobs. The designated organization provides short-term, intensive training that prepares individuals for the identified jobs. The partner companies, in turn, use the designated organization as the hiring ‘window’ because it already has prescreened and trained prospective workers.”

Some salient features of this approach include:

- A range of interventions (that is, options for each client), including pre-employment preparation, skills training, removing barriers to work, such as access to child care or transportation, providing alternative options such as self-employment and small business development, income enhancement, workplace adjustment, career advancement;
- Identification of employment opportunities involving a systematic, methodical and in-depth exploration of the local labour market, identifying not only existing job vacancies but also emerging potential employment possibilities, and the related skills required to undertake those jobs;
- Tailoring the training to a specific job opening;
- An emphasis on “work first” – that is, rather than extended training, placement in a job as quickly as possible, reflecting the view that “the best way to succeed in the labour market is to join it.”

Torjman cautions against assuming that one strategy will be appropriate for all groups of unemployed persons. She enumerates the following categories of unemployed persons:

- The unemployed, those currently without jobs or new entrants to the labour force or those who are re-entering after a period of absence;
- The persistently unemployed, with limited skills and little or no previous work experience (includes inner-city young adults);
- The working poor, including part-time, full-time or self-employed individuals who are paid low wages with few benefits;
- The dependant poor, those on social assistance;
- The indigent, those with no viable means of support, who also may have significant mental health, substance abuse or severe personal problems (such as the homeless).

In Torjman's view, the working poor and unemployed can benefit from such programs as small business creation and the provision of capital for self-employment. The persistently unemployed and dependent poor would benefit from competency-training and social supports, such as childcare. The indigent require extensive interventions on several fronts to stabilize their life situation before any employment related strategy could be applied.

Torjman differs from the U.S. approach in placing more stress on pre-employment programs, particularly for the indigent and to a degree for the unemployed and dependent poor. The American approach (at least as it is reported) has been to emphasize early placement in job, with significant in-placement and post-placement support.

The difference may be more a matter of degree and a matter of judgment. It seems commonsensical to recognize the severe barriers which the chronically homeless may face which must be addressed before employment opportunities can be considered. However there is no doubt that among the homeless, particularly among the short-term or episodically homeless, there exist those who, with appropriate short-term assistance and relevant follow-up, could take on a job sooner rather than later. These assessments are an important consideration in choosing the intervention most appropriate for each individual.

### **Some models in Toronto**

Actual employment linkage is taking place in various forms in Toronto. While it has in the past often been limited to each agency doing its own form of employment placement, that work has in some instances grown to be quite substantive (as in the case of the Learning Enrichment Foundation), or has now evolved into an actual brokerage operation for a whole sector (SES – Strategic Employment Solutions, for the disabled, and YEJD – Youth Employment Job Development Project, for youth).

Strategic Employment Solutions (SES). This is a project just getting implemented, involving a consortium of agencies (Ontario March of Dimes, JVS Toronto, ALDER Centre, Corbrook and COSTI), where the job development call/contact work is done through one operation. The specific focus of this operation is persons with disabilities, and employers who are targeted are those who are seeking to be in compliance with Employment Equity requirements. The actual employment placement operation coordinates many other functions including: marketing; access to mentors; interviews with, on-going support and follow-up with job developers; and common procedures developed and applied with each agency, e.g. mentoring guidelines, job readiness criteria, qualitative and quantitative data capture and reporting. This project aims to place over 200 people with disabilities in a one-year period. This project is primarily funded by ODSP.

Youth Employment Job Development Project (YEJD). YEJD seeks to develop a coordinated youth employment service sector among community-based organizations that recruit employers and to create strong partnerships with the employer community that

will result in increased job opportunities for “at risk” youth. YEJD operates on behalf of 28 youth employment service agencies in Toronto, with its operations centred in the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC). YEJD is not a job broker itself, however it develops common promotional activities for these agencies (including a common brochure), it works with employer sectors to promote linkages with these employment agencies, and it coordinates the sharing of job leads among job developers within the member agencies. This latter function was initially done through exchange of job leads at monthly meetings, but now this activity is going on-line. YEJD also works with the Economic Development office of the city, identifying new companies and making them aware of this service, and offering other strategies, such as holding job fairs. YEJD is funded by the City of Toronto.

Learning Enrichment Foundation. LEF is a multi-faceted community organization providing a range of employment-related services to its community, and represents probably the most integrated model in the city of an agency combining training, community economic development, job search and job placement.

A client approaching LEF has several options: participate in employment search activities, engage in a training program, try to start a new business or participate in a CED business. In many cases, there may be more than one avenue pursued: for example, receiving training in childcare may also involve on-the-job training in LEF’s on-site childcare service.

Clients engage in structured job search activities, where they are seeking work not only for themselves but are acting as job developers for LEF clients as a whole. When a job opportunity is identified, LEF will prepare several of its candidates for the job interview. As well, employers are asked regarding future potential employment, as well as the prospects of linking training programs to emerging jobs.

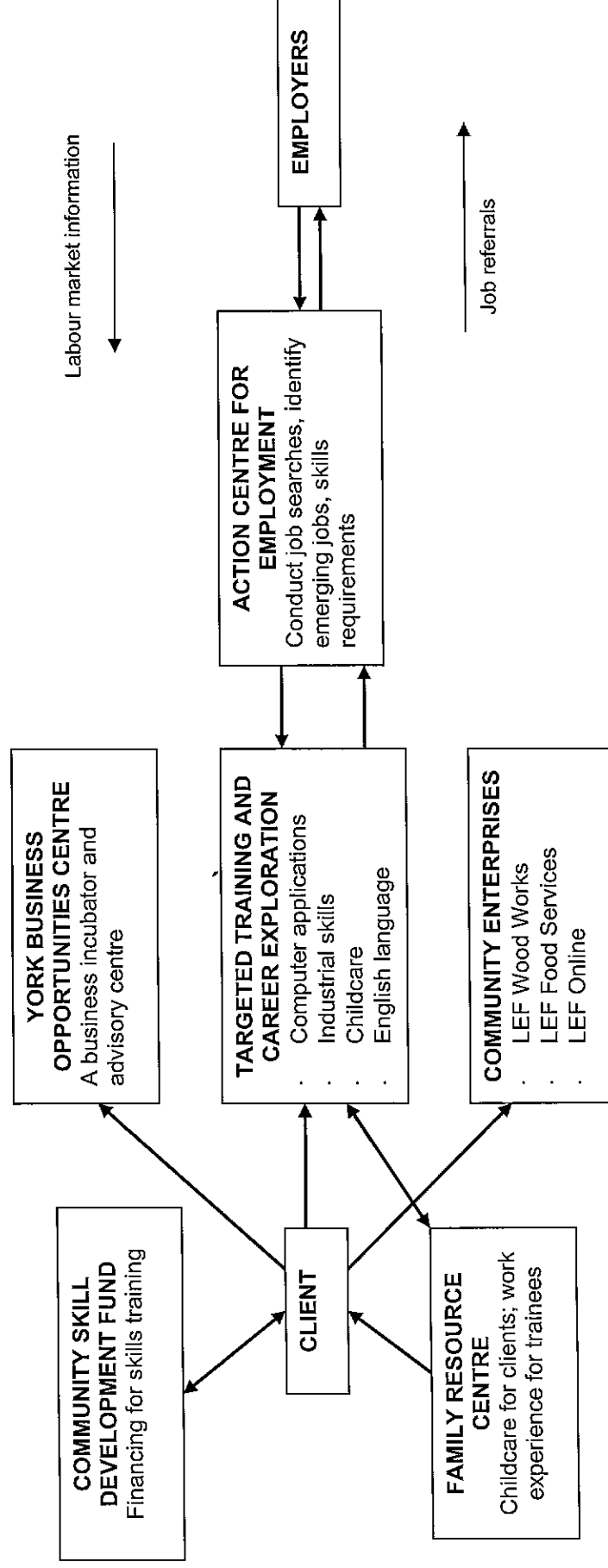
Clients may also seek support in developing their new business ideas through the York Business Opportunities Centre. LEF also has several on-site CED businesses, notably their food service operations and a woodworking shop.

Finally, LEF has been seeking donations to finance a Community Skill Development Fund which would provide loans to clients who do not have their training paid for through public programs (most usually EI or OW), seeking repayment after a client has obtained employment.

The diagram on the next page provides a picture of the various LEF activities and their interrelationships.

LEF’s work, as noted earlier, is probably the most integrated. Another comparable operation is the Rexdale MicroSkills and, up to a few years ago, Goodwill also provided quite a number of programs providing customized training leading to employment in specific sectors, although it now appears to be reigning in some of its activities.

## LEARNING ENRICHMENT FOUNDATION



## **General findings regarding transition to employment programs**

In preparing this paper, a range of studies was reviewed. Several of these studies referred to transition to employment programs serving individuals with multiple barriers to employment. Many were more general and identified “best practices” which were not specific to a particular program but more so to an approach or attitude which contributed to success. The findings can be summarized under a number of headings and speak to various generic considerations. After each short “finding” reference is made to the sources which support the comment. For a more complete description of the sources cited, please see the bibliography at the end of this report.

### **1. Combining social vision with entrepreneurial skills**

- **Focused mission with clear goals and customers**

Successful programs have identified a niche and have developed expertise in that area. They did not try to be “all things to all people”. When seeking to expand, they tend to use strategic alliances or expansions through other existing systems.

(Conn. Study)

In some cases, it may make more sense to partner with other agencies to ensure an appropriate range of services and supports can be provided, rather than seek to provide everything out of one program.

(U.S. Labour)

- **Visionary and pragmatic leadership**

One needs the vision to see the “big picture” and to keep oneself focused on the social mission, however one also needs strong grounding in the entrepreneurial skills, staying focused on the needs of the market, the clients and the participants in the program, developing common sense approaches which can be supported by the market and by funders.

(Conn. Study)

- **Entrepreneurial, opportunity-driven approach**

Programs which took as their starting point addressing the needs of their clients were less successful. Rather the orientation needs to be one of recognizing opportunities in the market and maximizing these opportunities. One then matches the need to the market opportunity, blending the entrepreneurial vision and the entrepreneurial skill in exploiting the opportunity with a social purpose.

(Conn. Study)

Sound business practices can help drive the realization of the organization's social mission. Usually this relies on a social entrepreneur who can lead the initiative and situate it within the nonprofit's mission. (Roberts Foundation)

- **Expectation of employment**

There should be an attitude among clients and staff that employment is normal, important and an expectation for everyone. (End Homelessness)

To succeed in the management of its non-profit enterprises, a non-profit must develop an organizational self-image of "job creator" and not simply "social worker." (Roberts Foundation)

## **2. Connect with your market**

- **Know your market**

Programs have to understand the labour market needs of the businesses they are connecting with. This requires continuing labour market studies, consultation with partner businesses, and constant adaptation to market needs. (Conn. Study); (End Homelessness)

The involvement of business partners in the planning and implementation of the program particularly contributed to its effectiveness. (End Homelessness)

- **Linked to a market need**

Programs which fulfilled a market need of some sort were found to be successful. Those programs which responded to a market need were able to develop more rapidly. (Conn. Study)

- **Focused on a market strategy**

In cases where the program developed or supported its own businesses, they were able to connect these directly to existing markets, where the program design had already established the linkages with the business sector. (Conn. Study)

- **High level corporate, philanthropic or government endorsement**

The most successful of these programs had at least one “champion” at a high level in a corporation, foundation or in government. A partnership of public and private endorsement increased support even further. The role of the “champion” as someone who was willing to put funding and the commitment of their institution into the program was a pivotal success factor. This was more likely where the program involved the champion in the early design and/or implementation of the program, and in the case of the corporate sector was more likely to occur where the program responded to well-researched and regularly updated intelligence on market needs.

(Conn. Study)

### 3. Address client needs

- **Comprehensive, customer-focused program design**

The focus of one’s efforts has to be on producing outcomes for the participant in the program, not on the provision of services for them. Programs need to address the specific needs of each individual participant, recognizing the range of needs and how these change over time.

(Conn. Study)

- **Providing holistic range of services**

The more disadvantaged the target population, the greater the need for a holistic approach to supporting the transition to employment. In the case of the homeless, any initiative requires at minimum: case management and planning; assessment and employability development planning; job training services, including remedial education, basic skills training, literacy instruction, job search assistance, job counselling, vocational and occupational skills training, and on-the-job training; post-placement and follow-up and support services; housing services; other supports, for example, child care, transportation, addiction or alcohol counselling. (Roberts Foundation); (U.S. Labor)

In some cases, other issues may have to be dealt with before training or employment programs can be offered. In the case of the homeless, their housing situation needs to be stabilized first (finding transitional housing or a shelter which allows for extended stay).

(U.S. Labor)

Assisting people out of poverty requires addressing their issues and barriers on a range of fronts, for example: enhancing their financial assets



(e.g. income from employment); social assets (e.g. networks and family supports); human assets (e.g. skills or personal health); physical assets (basic needs); and personal assets (e.g. motivation and self-esteem).  
(CdnWomen)

- **Emphasis on initial assessment and continuing tracking**

In order to ensure each client is treated as an individual and receives the most appropriate service or support, the initial assessment is crucial. In addition, some factors may not be apparent in the first instance, or circumstances may change, and so on-going case management and review of each individual's status and progress is essential.  
(End Homelessness); (U.S. Labour)

- **The value of the program creating and utilizing its own businesses**

Clients may not necessarily be job-ready, while some of the best training for job readiness may be through on-the-job experiences. As well, partner employers may not always be able to hire according to a schedule which matches when clients graduate from a training program. There are many benefits to a program supporting its own businesses as a place where individuals can acquire and hone various life skills, generic work skills as well as specific occupational skills. When operated properly, these businesses can contribute to the costs of running the parent programs.  
(End Homelessness)

- **Importance of post-placement support**

The problems of those who have been on social assistance for an extended period of time, or of the homeless, are not ones which will suddenly disappear upon entering a training program or even securing a job. Indeed in many cases these are only the first step towards changing the array of challenges which beset their lives. As well, the first placement or job will often be low-paying and will likely neither be a secure position nor one which will provide sufficient salary to help with the range of problems which need to be addressed (for example, transportation costs, child care, time management issues leading to stress and interpersonal and intra-family problems). For impacts to be sustainable, there is need for on-going counselling, support and services.  
(End Homelessness); (U.S. Labour); (Welfare-to-Work)

## A PROPOSED STRATEGY

In light of all this, what might be an appropriate strategy for community agencies in southeast downtown Toronto seeking to support the transition to employment for individuals facing multiple barriers to employment?

### The concept

For starters, such a strategy should have the following components:

- The strategy needs to provide a range of options, recognizing the different life circumstances, skills levels, work experience and support requirements of individuals;
- The strategy needs to provide a continuum of interventions, supporting a progression of interventions, providing individuals with a graduated path towards employment;
- That graduated path will need to make provisions for many harder-to-employ individuals, providing them with a more “forgiving” work environment for their immersion into work, to ease the acquisition of workplace experience while still receiving strong services and training support;
- The strategy needs to have strong linkages with employers, identifying current and emerging job opportunities and the skills required to fulfill those jobs.

In short, this describes a system, not an individual project or program.

Such a system can best be delivered through a coordination of services provided by several community agencies and other stakeholders (public institutions such as colleges, private sector partners such as employers and industry sector associations). It requires these partners to identify both the appropriate roles each of them can play, as well as commit to collaboration and where appropriate integration of their various programming to permit referrals and sharing of information. It requires funders willing to collaborate in a constructive way, that is, being sufficiently creative within the constraint of their legislative (for governments) and private (for philanthropic giving) mandates to provide financial support for those elements of the system which they can support.

Such a system can also accommodate a range of activities in the economic development field, not limited in some strict way to specific training for employment, but can include community economic development businesses and social enterprises, and community development initiatives such as asset mapping, by integrating them into the range of options and linking them to the private business sector, providing opportunities for marketing, for example.

Similarly, there could exist a range of potential transitional employment possibilities, including casual and part-time employment, CED businesses and social purpose enterprises, and placement in social agencies and the broader community sector. Indeed,

given the population to be served (that is, a good number of harder-to-employ individuals), this is more a necessary requirement than a desirable option. It may be useful to think of what this could look like at some future day as a fully matured, integrated system, then imagine a smaller project not so broad in scale. Indeed, one could even start with a project which may be a stand-alone initiative, then start expanding its scope by linking it further and further with existing agency program activities.

The diagram on the following page provides a schematic illustration of what such a system *could* look like. This model is offered as a starting point for a discussion, recognizing that different elements could be adjusted through the process of negotiation and deliberation, as a result of limitations imposed by funding, the sequencing of implementing such a system, and learnings derived from trying to operationalize such an approach.

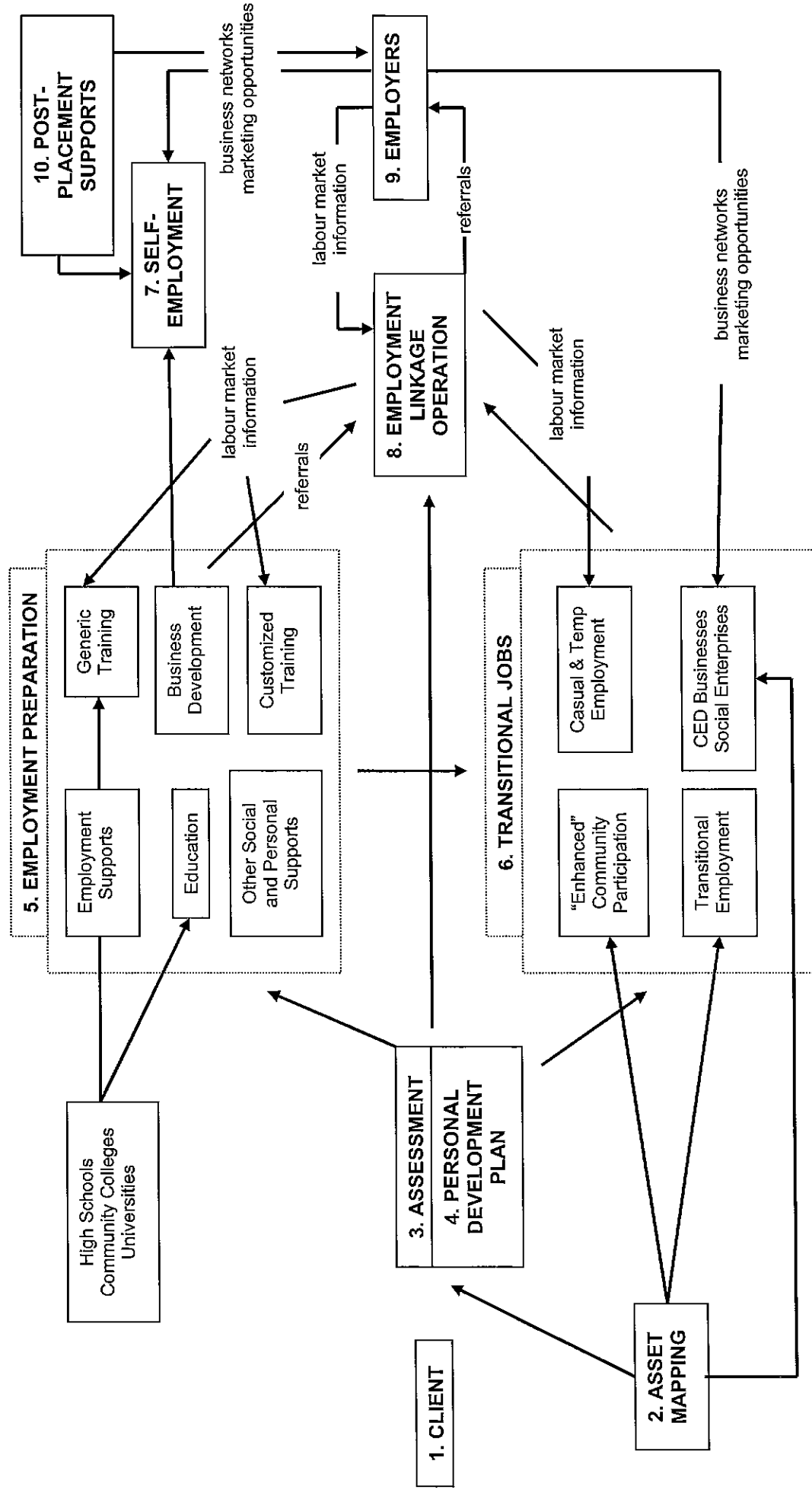
The general concept anticipates an integrated whole, where community agencies are coordinated in serving any given client. Partnering community agencies would agree on common intake-forms and assessment procedures, and could direct clients to an array of programs, services and opportunities which are provided by partners or others identified as potential resources for this system. The model would incorporate employment preparation, workplace experience and employment placement, as well as link to or provide support for educational and training programs, community economic development and self-employment options.

In order to illustrate this model, the following notes describe some of its major components (while this is intended to describe such a model in the abstract, it has been developed with southeast Toronto in mind, and so some items have been included having regard for this context):

- 1. Client:** A client makes contact with a partner agency which is part of this integrated system, either by hearing about the services or by being referred to a partner agency.
- 2. Asset mapping:** Some opportunities, either related to the recruitment of individuals or the identification of skills among a group of individuals, will arise as a result of specific asset mapping and survey work being undertaken of particular populations (for example, Open Door Centre is conducting asset mapping of homeless individuals, cataloguing their skills and interests, and Dixon Hall is identifying entrepreneurial skills among residents of Regent Park). Individuals identified in this fashion could be directed toward employment transition programs or could be recruited for self-employment or social enterprise businesses.

*(Continued on page 27, following the diagram.)*

# CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM OF INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT LINKAGE PROGRAM



- 3. Assessment:** A key function of this system is the accurate assessment of each individual's capabilities and requirements for attaining employment. In the case of this system, it would require a common determination following intake for access to the system's programming; agencies would have to agree on an intake form and procedure, and protocols relating to sharing of information and protection of matters deemed private.
- 4. Personal Development Plan:** The immediate next step after assessment would involve fashioning a development plan appropriate to the client's needs and abilities, having regard to the range of options available in this integrated system, taking advantage of the various programs offered by partner agencies.
- 5. Employment Preparation:** These services include the various skills development as well as support services which help an individual access employment, including employment supports such as job search assistance (resume writing, interview skills), as well as other social and personal supports such as access to daycare and housing, life skills coaching, personal financial management, and so on; in addition, education, general training and customized training could form part of the employment preparation package, as well as programs to assist individuals wishing to pursue self-employment; customized training would involve short-term training programs to prepare individuals for specific jobs identified through the employment linkage operation (some of these could be delivered through community colleges).
- 6. Transitional Jobs:** In addition to personal supports and specific training, some individuals would benefit from in-the-workplace experience, to acquire the habits expected on the job; this can be provided in circumstances which could be viewed as less threatening, such as through an "enhanced" Community Placement program under Ontario Works. Instead of individuals finding "volunteer activities," one could follow the Philadelphia model, creating real jobs and treating the experience as such. One could add the structure of other training during the placement experience, building the participant's knowledge and confidence. Under this heading of Transitional Jobs could also be included casual and temporary work assignments, as well as employment in a CED business or social purpose enterprise.
- 7. Self-Employment:** Some individuals will be interested in starting their own businesses, for which they can receive business planning assistance, coaching and mentoring, potential links into private sector networks, and access to loan funds.

- 8. Employment Linkage Operation:** It is important that this be seen as a separate operation; its focus must be on the employers, viewing them as clients, while drawing on the community agencies and their programs for the labour pool to meet employers' requirements; their function would be to conduct constant labour market surveys, identifying jobs and the related skills for those jobs, and feeding this information back to the system, to identify candidates for these positions and to shape the training programs.
- 9. Employers:** Employers need not merely be "clients" of this process – they can be partners as well, helping to shape and in some cases participate in the delivery of training programs (this is particularly in the case of sector-wide approaches); they can also be partners with self-employment and CED businesses, providing market information and acting as buyers and suppliers.
- 10. Post-Placement Supports:** A crucial element of this system must be post-placement support, both for the clients (who will be facing many new tensions in the workplace and, as a result, in other realms, for example at home) and for employers (the attraction for employers in participating in this system is the assurance that their new employees will be receiving assistance in adjusting to their work); as well, given that many of these jobs will be entry-level positions (and thus low-paying), future career advancement planning and assistance would be required to ensure a sustainable employment path.

### **What this strategy could look like in practice**

It might be useful to return to a previous study commissioned by the Downtown East Community Development Collective when it first started exploring the possibilities related to employment linkages. This was a paper prepared by MacKenzie McIntyre & Associates entitled: *Proposal to Human Resources Development Canada Submitted by the Downtown East Community Development Coalition: A Pro-Active Employment Linkage Initiative (August 2001)*. The consultants explored the interest on the part of local community agencies and employers for an employment placement initiative, operating as a local employment linkage program.

What is relevant to this current report are the findings arising from stakeholder interviews and focus groups, notably:

#### From employers:

- The majority of employers interviewed, had no knowledge of community-based employment programs;
- They were keenly interested in hiring locally, but found it difficult to find workers that demonstrated a positive attitude towards work;

- There appeared to be a continuous need for entry-level positions that did not require high levels of education (the average was grade 10) or skills. The message from employers was, “if a person is reliable, flexible, can work with other people and has a willingness to learn, they are hireable. We can teach them whatever they need to know on the job;”
- All of the employers indicated an interest in developing community partnerships for recruitment purposes and were available to assist the community agencies with workplace orientation training;
- The National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians (NABET), SkyDome, and St. Michael’s Hospital have all participated in work experience initiatives (internships, apprenticeships, job placements) with different community programs; they spoke highly of such partnerships and were interested in discussing such opportunities with DECDC;
- The response from employers was extremely positive. There appears to be a great opportunity for employer/community employment partnerships, if it is done right.

From community agencies:

- All the community agencies that participated in the focus group had employment programs, however all were not funded to do direct employer outreach on behalf of their clients. Informal referral systems had developed between local agencies to assist with job placements;
- Many of the community agencies lacked up-to-date information on employment opportunities and trends in their local area; they were genuinely surprised by the employer research findings (availability of work, wage scales, skill requirements, etc.) and were eager to develop formalized partnerships with local employers; however, they felt that an orientation to private sector partnerships would be critical;
- Untapped expertise exists within the individual community agencies; if developed, this knowledge could be shared with other agencies through a “train-the-trainer” model;
- The average educational level of clients registered with the community employment programs was relatively high and a significant percent of these clients were job ready; in many situations, the critical barrier to employment was lack of Canadian work experience and language skills;
- There was overwhelming support by the community groups for a centralized employment agency that would be responsible for developing employer partnerships on behalf of their client groups.

All these findings point to tremendous opportunity and support for a more integrated, holistic strategy for promoting access to employment in this community.

Certainly among the DECDC member agencies, each partner has one or more roles to play, for example:

- Dixon Hall, Fred Victor Centre and the Toronto Christian Resource Centre have contact with many clients seeking employment, and each have various programs which could be part of the continuum of services and supports required to provide an integrated, holistic strategy;
- Open Door Centre's Asset Mapping Project has been pioneering the identification of skills, talents and job interests among their homeless drop-in population;
- Ryerson University, Sherbourne Health Centre and St. Michael's Hospital, in addition to providing support for programs in their areas, are also potential employers in this scheme;
- Gerrard Resource Centre could play a vital role as a centre for the provision of childcare and training of child care workers, a critical element for assisting parents with young families to enter the labour force.

This is just an illustration of roles –other functions are also possible, as is the usefulness and relevance to involving other local agencies in the initiative.

## **NEXT STEPS**

As a practical matter, what would be the next steps to put into place such a system?

There are several fortuitous circumstances which make the possibility of such a system more likely. For one, many of the pieces are already in place, in that many of the component programs (employment supports, workplace experience, and so on) are already there. As well, the thinking behind this approach reflects views and indeed experiences which are being practiced in other jurisdictions (notably the United States) and which are gaining greater and greater currency in Canada. Thirdly, governments themselves are looking at the labour market challenge again, particularly in relation to the harder-to-employ individual. Both Ontario Works and HRDC are examining their respective roles once more with regard to this population.

If one is to serve this population, this integrated, holistic, system-wide approach not only seems the way to go, but it appears that the time is right for such an approach to gain wider support.

That being said, no one should be under any illusions as to how much work is involved in trying to put something like this into place. Negotiating partnerships among community agencies, drafting appropriate program protocols and procedures, securing developmental and operational funding from governments and the philanthropic sector, engaging employers in a concrete way, will take time and effort. Having reviewed the experiences of other jurisdictions, though, one would be hard-pressed to say there is any alternative route to securing employment for many of the harder-to-employ residents of downtown east Toronto.

So, in terms of practical next steps, the following would need to be done:



1. This initiative needs to be seen as an iterative process:
  - i. Defining the concept;
  - ii. Getting buy-in from partners;
  - iii. Getting buy-in from funders;
  - iv. Moving the concept to a concrete proposal;
  - v. Repeat (i) to (iii);
  - vi. Turning the proposal into a program;
  - vii. Repeat (i) to (iii);
  - viii. Implementing the program...  
Etc., etc., etc....
2. The first step, then, is for the staff members of the DECDC to endorse as much of the concept as they feel comfortable endorsing, recognizing that many elements will have to be worked out in the refining of the concept through discussions with each agency, with potential partners and with funders; however, the main elements of an endorsement should include:
  - i. a common project supported by DECDC;
  - ii. the notion of a common, shared employment placement function;
  - iii. the notion of transitional jobs;
  - iv. agreement in principle to explore the integration of programs among agencies;
  - v. identifying other potential partners who should be brought into this process soon;
  - vi. endorsing the need for further funding to develop the concept;
3. It might be useful to at least sound out, in principle, potential funders regarding the overall concept and the prospects of securing developmental funding to take the concept to the next level of detail;
4. The next step would be to call a meeting of the executive directors of the DECDC agencies, to review the recommendations of staff, and to secure agreement in principle to proceed; this would include recruiting other partners as well as developing formal proposals to secure the next stage of funding;
5. By this point the initiative will start taking on a life of its own, and it may be presumptuous to outline what those steps would look like; suffice it to say that if the start of this involves a willingness to explore options and to allow for the concept to evolve, then it will have been

launched in the right way; eventually, the program design will include such matters as:

- Detailed design of the proposal components;
- Agreements in principle among the community partners relating to case management protocols;
- Identification of an appropriate information and case management system, including software and hardware requirements;
- Recruitment of an initial base of employers (including sectoral associations, for example, the hospitality industry or the food industry) who are prepared to participate in a referral system, and their involvement in helping shape training and workplace experiences;
- Identification of other components which may require resourcing over and above what currently is in place in the existing fragmented system (possibly greater support for CED business start-up);
- Full budget proposal.

There should be agreement that these steps noted above be undertaken and completed as expeditiously as possible, to provide a focus and momentum to the initiative. A timeframe of 12 months would be realistic.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND INTERVIEW LIST**

**Research for this paper consisted on three activities: reviewing reports, surfing websites and conducting interviews.**

**Useful studies which have formed the research basis for this report and which are cited in support of the findings:**

**CdnWomen** – Studies on behalf of The Women and Economic Development Consortium (WEDC), a program administered by the Canadian Women's Foundation involving foundations and private sector partners seeking to support micro-enterprise initiatives among low-income women. The first study, *Women in Transition Out of Poverty: An asset-based approach to building sustainable livelihoods (2001)*, details their conceptual view of promoting an asset-based approach to sustainable livelihoods while the second, *Women in Transition Out of Poverty: A guide to effective practice in promoting sustainable livelihoods through enterprise development (2002)*, provides a practical guide for implementing such a strategy.

[http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit_eng.pdf)

<http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT02/WIT02eng.pdf>

**Conn. Study** – *National Survey of Urban Economic and Community Development Models, prepared for the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, 2000*. This study examined four categories of programs from across the

Unites States: Urban Education Program Models; Transition to Work Models; Entrepreneurial Development Models; Tax Incentive and Finance Models. This 93-page report is well organized and provides a number of good case study profiles.

[http://www.liscnet.org/resources/assets/asset\\_upload\\_file966\\_656.pdf](http://www.liscnet.org/resources/assets/asset_upload_file966_656.pdf)

**End Homelessness** – The National Alliance to End Homelessness (U.S.) web site has a summary page for “The Elements of an Effective Employment Program,” summarizing findings from other studies.

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/vista/elemnts.htm>

**Roberts Foundation** – This U.S. foundation, through its Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, has funded numerous projects and studies, and made available numerous reports, on social purpose enterprises, particularly those aimed at the homeless. Their publications page can be found at [http://www.redf.org/pub\\_intro.htm](http://www.redf.org/pub_intro.htm). In particular, a very useful study is *New Social Entrepreneurs: The Success, Challenge, and Lessons of Nonprofit Enterprise Creation (1996)*, which can be downloaded from the aforementioned link.

**U.S. Labour** – *Employment and Training for America's Homeless: Best Practices Guide (U.S. Department of Labour, 1997)*. This is an excellent summary of 63 programs offered through organizations across the United States under the Job Training Partnership Act. This 175-page report highlighted practices better than the report issued in 1998 which was an evaluation of the projects (although a good report as well).

Best practices report: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/opr/FULLTEXT/etah/etahtext.html>

(Unfortunately this latter link is an html; a pdf file exists, but I can no longer seem to find it. I have a pdf version of this report and can e-mail it on request.)

Final evaluation: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/opr/fulltext/98-homeless.pdf>

**Welfare-to-Work** – *Post-Employment Education and Training Models in the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program (The Urban Institute, 1999)*. This study emphasizes the need for continuing supports and programs to assist long-term welfare recipients to break through the various barriers which have prevented them from advancing beyond long-term reliance on social assistance. Their major point is that these barriers and challenges are complex and deep-rooted, and require on-going and persistent effort to ensure sustainable improvements. That is, for this population their lower skills trap them in less secure, low-paying jobs where their other personal and family issues and challenges make it difficult for them to advance or even hold on to their jobs.

<http://wtw.doleta.gov/documents/postemploy.asp>

### **Case studies or project descriptions which illustrate the findings of this report:**

#### **Binding Together, Inc. (New York)**

<http://www.bindingtogether.org/index.htm>

Vocational rehab program (six months) providing job training and placement.

Fields: printing technology; graphic communication; computer skills.

Along with job training, the program provides vocational counseling, remedial education, workplace literacy, job placement and fifteen months of follow-up counseling support once a person achieves employment; upon job placement, graduates receive a \$2000 stipend for housing and clothing. 35% of their operating expenses are funded through their not-for-profit printing, copying and binding services

**Esperanza Unida, Inc. (Milwaukee)**

<http://www.esperanzaunida.org>

Provides counseling, representation, job training, and job placement to minority, injured, and unemployed workers.

Esperanza Unida has created twelve training businesses over the years including welding and metal fabrication, auto repair, construction, childcare, customer service, and printing and graphic arts. Each was created in direct response to job market opportunities and to specific community needs, focusing on skills that lead to jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits.

Advisory committees, assembled by Esperanza Unida and composed of community volunteers familiar with the respective industry, assisted in the creation and the continual enhancement of each of these training businesses.

Esperanza Unida is 50% to 70% self-supporting through revenues generated from training businesses.

**Chrysalis (Los Angeles)**

<http://www.chrysalisworks.org>

Chrysalis began as a food and clothing center for homeless individuals.

Two years later, it developed into a center for homeless individuals to help them to look for work, to receive mail and messages from employers, and to make phone calls.

Counseling and employment services were then built around this core day center model, with job search classes and resume writing.

In 1990, Chrysalis received a grant to establish a temporary employment agency with the goal of operating a self-supporting business. The initial targeted employment sector was low-skill work in light industrial warehousing.

Based on the success of Labor Connection, StreetWorks, a street cleaning program, was added as another employment option to help meet the varying needs of the would-be employees.

Chrysalis has evolved into a multi-track comprehensive employment program designed to meet the different employment needs and job readiness positions of the full range of would be workers who seek out Chrysalis' employment services.

While Chrysalis does not hide the fact that its employees have had problems in the past, its customer sales approach is to emphasize that it has access to a labor pool of highly motivated job seekers with very positive attitudes

who want to work. When selling its services to potential employers, Labor Connection sales representatives stress the program's tight supervisory oversight over its workers and its employee assistance program, arguing that this sort of post-placement support creates stronger clients.

### **Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS) (Berkley)**

<http://www.self-sufficiency.org>

Over 75% of their program participants receive public benefits and the rest have no income or work at or near minimum wage. For disabled individuals who are unable to work, BOSS helps them secure permanent public benefits. For those who are able to work, BOSS economic development programs help people move into jobs in order to stay housed and be able to support themselves and their families. The goal of their Economic Development Strategy is to help their participants build and maintain economic security, through: job training; job placement and retention; program micro-enterprise; savings programs; adult education.

### **STRIVE (New York)**

<http://www.strivenewyork.org/strive.html>

Mission: To prepare, train, place and support inner-city youth and young adults in long term employment experiences. In addition, its aim is to demonstrate the impact of attitudinal training and post placement support on the long-term employment of that population. There are a number of lessons that STRIVE has learned in its work with young people. Primarily, three particular lessons stand out that are uniquely a part of the STRIVE model. They are:

- The role that initial access to and success in the entry-level labor market plays in long-term labor market success.
- The utilization of work and work-like experiences to foster the growth in attitudinal perspective and acceptable labor market behavior.
- The importance of post employment follow-up and support for success.

STRIVE was founded on the strong belief that the problem of unemployment and under-employment for residents of depressed communities is the lack of access. In addition, STRIVE tailored its brand of attitudinal job readiness based on the view that inner-city youth possess survival skills and intangible skills that are transferable to the entry-level, semi-skilled labour market. Attitudinal change (as it relates to workforce development attainment/skills acquisition) is reviewed during the course of the training process in a qualitative manner by observing the participant's demeanour, appearance, outlook, effort, attentiveness, sincerity, participation, dependability and cognitive skills.

STRIVE makes a formative commitment to following up every graduate.

Graduate services staff utilize communication with the employer to strengthen the post placement support process. In addition to weekly and monthly contacts via the telephone, ongoing evening and weekend workshop sessions are conducted, and face-to-face counselling sessions and home visits are made on an as needed basis.

**Bridges To Work Demonstration Linking Inter-City Residents to Metropolitan Wide Opportunities** (Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Milwaukee, and St. Louis)

<http://www.huduser.org/publications/povsoc/btw/demowork.html>

Each BtW site has an identified geographic origin (a low-income, inner-city neighbourhood) and a destination (a suburban job opportunity site). As BtW participants, work-ready inner-city residents will receive enhanced program services provided through BtW's three key program elements: (1) Placement in existing, private suburban jobs through a metropolitan employment placement mechanism; (2) A targeted commute connecting workers to otherwise inaccessible suburban job locations; (3) Support services, such as counselling, crisis intervention, and child care, to ensure that workers can sustain these connections and to mitigate any demands created by the suburban commute.

**Interviews**

The following individuals were interviewed as part of this research work:

Anne Babcock  
WoodGreen Community Centre

Susan Brown  
City of Toronto

Debra Campbell  
Canadian Women's Foundation

Paul Chamberlain  
Dixon Hall

Liz Creal  
Fred Victor Centre

Charmaine Duller  
City of Toronto

Peter Frampton  
Learning Enrichment Foundation

Jen Liptrot  
ACTEW

Simon Liston  
City of Toronto

Kerry-Ann Markle  
Ontario Disability Support Program

Jennifer Morris  
Eva's Phoenix

Sharon Myatt  
Consultant

Sheena Patel  
Dixon Hall

Karen Wilson  
City of Toronto

Stan Wojick  
Human Resources Development Canada